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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CANNED MEAT FACTS." Information from the Bureau of Animal Industry and the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Among the mistaken notions, incorrect ideas, and unfounded superstitions that are abroad these days are some about canned meat. Every now and then some suspicious soul spreads a harrowing story of dangers from some good food -- an entirely incorrect story, you understand. And then I think that the time has come to start some conversation in defense of the wrongfully accused. Just lately I've been hearing some wrong rumors about canned meat, especially the canned meat distributed for relief. So I'm going to give you the exact facts about this food, just as they come from the Federal Bureau of Animal Industry and the Bureau of Home Economics.

The experts say that "canned meat has long been known as a wholesome product. It is cooked during the canning process, so it requires only a short heating before it goes on the table. Whether sold in ordinary commercial channels or distributed to the needy, all canned meat that goes into interstate trade must undergo the same government inspection of the live animal, the carcass and the finished product. Relief meat in packing plants under Federal inspection gets exactly the same careful supervision as meat going into commercial channels. The Federal meat inspectors from the United States Department of Agriculture watch every step in preparing meat for consumption, even to the inspection of the cans after sterilization and labeling."

That ought to reassure you if you've been looking askance at any meat put up in cans. Canned meat is a good wholesome food, but the experts say it needs good care at home to keep that way.

Underreasonably good conditions, unopened canned meat will keep almost indefinitely. But as soon as you open a can, you should give the meat the same care as any other cooked meat. If you haven't proper refrigeration to keep it safely, better use it as soon as you take it out of the can. Even with good refrigeration, canned meat, like all cooked meat, should be consumed soon, before any spoilage can take place. This need for great care in keeping canned or cooked meat at home -- lots of housewives don't yet understand it.

Then, many people still have the mistaken notion that leaving canned food in the can once they have opened it is unsafe. Any canned food -- and that includes meat -- is just as safe in an opened can as in any other open container. But you need to use all canned and cooked foods promptly and keep them cool and covered from the time they are opened until they are to be eaten.

Dr. J. R. Mohler, Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry, who is in charge of Federal meat inspectors says this about relief meat: "There is an odd psychology in connection with the distribution and use of all so-called 'relief meat.' Persons who receive food without cost are frequently suspicious or critical of its quality -- more suspicious than the same persons would be if they bought similar foods at regular prices. However, we believe Federal inspection has reassured most people about the quality of the meat they receive."

The meat cookery experts in the Bureau of Home Economics have for several years been working out good ways of preparing and serving canned meat. They say that one of the advantages of using this meat is that it is already cooked, so you can heat and have it on the table in a very short time. Where every penny counts, short cooking means fuel economy.

They also suggest that one of the most economical and satisfactory ways to serve canned beef is as the center of a one-dish meat, and remember that since the beef is already cooked, you cook the vegetables and cereals first and add the canned beef last.

When you take the meat from the can, you can cut it in slices or small cubes, or you can grind it in your meat grinder. When cut up this way it will be easy to reheat. Since some of the flavor of the meat must necessarily be lost in canning, the meat is especially adapted to dishes that have plenty of seasoning. For example, you can use it in combinations seasoned with onions, tomatoes or other vegetables or spices of various kinds. You can use canned meat in curries, in croquettes or timbales with tomato sauce, in meat pie, in hash, or in many of the foreign dishes that call for sauce and seasoning. If you use canned meat in a stew, add the meat only toward the end of the cooking. If you use it with a sauce, make and cook the sauce thoroughly beforehand. Add the meat last and simply allow it to cook through before you serve it.

Let's not forget to mention that old favorite -- corned beef, which many people use from cans nowadays. You can buy raw canned beef and you'll usually find the price per pound much less than the canned. But you'll probably need two pounds of raw corned beef to equal one solid pound of canned corned beef. And the canned beef is already cooked and that will save fuel when you come to use it. This saving is considerable, for where you'll need three or four hours to boil a piece of raw beef, you'll need only half an hour or less to heat the canned product thoroughly.

Here's how the experts suggest fixing one of the best corned beef combinations -- panned cabbage and canned corned beef for supper. They say to heat three tablespoons of fat in a large pan and then add three quarts of shredded cabbage. Cover the pan to keep in the steam and cook for from ten to fifteen minutes, stirring thoroughly. Now add one pint of canned corned beef, separated in small pieces, and heat thoroughly. Season to taste with salt, pepper and a little vinegar. There's an old-time humble dish, but a very good one. And one that is quick and easy to prepare.

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